AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the captioned patent application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 2~~ claim 40, wherein said transducer-side coupling element is constructed and arranged to be fixedly connected to said transducer ~~already~~ during production of said transducer.

4. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 2~~ claim 40, wherein said transducer-side coupling element is constructed and arranged to be fixedly connected to said transducer in the course of an implantation of said transducer.

5. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 2~~ claim 40, wherein said micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises an at least partially circular opening configured to receive ~~defines means for receiving~~ said transducer-side coupling element.

6. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 2~~ claim 40, wherein at least one of said coupling elements is at least partially made of elastic material.

7. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 6, ~~wherein the~~ wherein said elastic material is a ~~soft~~ polymeric material.

8. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein both coupling elements are made of non-elastic material.

9. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 8, wherein the non-elastic material is selected from the group consisting of hard polymeric materials, biocompatible metals and ceramic materials.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 2~~ claim 40, wherein

said micromanipulator-side coupling element defines a rigid annular receiver member, and ~~wherein the~~ said transducer-side coupling element is ~~at least partially elastic and~~ adapted to snap into said rigid annular receiver member in a substantially axial direction.

12. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises an expandable fork, and wherein the transducer-side coupling element is adapted to be snapped into the fork in a substantially radial direction.

13. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises an expandable receiver member, and wherein the transducer-side coupling element is adapted to be inserted into the receiver member in a substantially axial direction and to be locked in a position in which the transducer-side coupling element is detained.

14. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises a pair of expandable tongs, and wherein the transducer-side coupling element is adapted to be introduced between the tongs in a substantially axial direction.

15. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 14, comprising locking means for locking the expandable tongs in a closed position in which the transducer-side coupling element is detained.

16. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 15, wherein the locking means comprise a sleeve which is mounted for sliding movement along a portion of the tongs.

17. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the releasable coupling unit comprises a plug-type coupling including a pair of coupling elements one of which is adapted to be inserted into the other one, said coupling elements, in the assembled state of the coupling, being held engaged with each other by an interference fit.

18. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 17, wherein said one coupling element includes a dovetailed portion and said other coupling element includes a complementary receiving groove adapted to receive the dovetailed portion.

19. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 2~~ claim 40, wherein at least one of said two coupling elements is rotationally symmetrical about an axis.

20. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element is axially symmetrical with respect to an axis of the transducer.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 1,~~ claim 40, wherein said electromechanical output transducer is selected from the group consisting of electromagnetic, electrodynamic, magnetostrictive, dielectric and piezoelectric transducers and of combinations of such transducers.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) An at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:

~~at least one~~ means for electromechanical stimulation;

~~a positioning~~ positioning means for rotationally and axially positioning said stimulation means, and for ~~said positioning means having means for~~ fixing said stimulation means ~~in a position set by said positioning means~~ after said positioning means is fixedly attached to a cranial vault; and

releasable snap-in-locking-type coupling means comprising: a first coupling means connected to said electromechanical stimulation means, and a second coupling means connected to said transducer, wherein the first and second coupling means are configured so as to enable the second coupling element to snapingly connect to the first coupling element without causing adjustment to the positioning means and to securely mechanically lock the

second coupling means to the first coupling means, and to enable the second coupling means to be releasably disconnected from the first coupling means.

~~a releasable coupling means disposed between the stimulation means and the positioning means,~~

~~said coupling means, in an assembled state, fixing said stimulation means with respect to said positioning means, and, in a released state, permitting removal of said stimulation means from said positioning means, and~~

~~wherein said releasable coupling means is a snap-in coupling means that enables replacement of said stimulation means while maintaining said position set by said positioning means prior to removal without readjustment of said positioning means.~~

24-27. (Cancelled)

28. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 24~~ claim 23, wherein at least one of said coupling means ~~elements~~ is at least partially made of elastic material.

29. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 28, ~~wherein the~~ wherein said elastic material is a soft polymeric material.

30. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 24~~ claim 23, wherein

said positioning-side coupling ~~element~~ means comprises ~~defines~~ a rigid annular receiver member, and wherein said stimulation-side coupling ~~element~~ means is at least partially elastic and is configured to snap ~~having means for snapping~~ into said rigid annular receiver member in a substantially axial direction.

31. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 24~~ claim 23, wherein at least one of said two coupling ~~elements~~ means is rotationally symmetrical.

32. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 23, wherein said electromechanical stimulation means is selected from the group consisting of electromagnetic, electrodynamic, magnetostrictive, dielectric and piezoelectric transducers and of combinations of such transducers.

33-39. (Cancelled)

40. (New) An at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:

at least one electromechanical output transducer;

a micromanipulator configured to rotationally and axially position said transducer, and to fix said transducer after said micromanipulator is fixedly attached to a cranial vault; and

a releasable snap-in-locking-type coupling unit comprising: a first coupling element connected to said micromanipulator, and a second coupling element connected to said transducer, wherein said coupling elements are configured so as to enable the second coupling element to snapingly connect to the first coupling element without causing adjustment to the micromanipulator and to securely mechanically lock the second coupling element to the first coupling element, , and to enable the second coupling element to be releasably disconnected from the first coupling element.

41. (New) A method of implanting an at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:

fixedly attaching a micromanipulator to the cranial vault of a recipient, said micromanipulator having a manipulator-side coupling attached thereto;

positioning said micromanipulator in a desired position;

releasably coupling at least one electromechanical transducer, the at least one transducer having a transducer-side coupling element connected thereto, to said micromanipulator, comprising:

snapping said transducer-side coupling element into said micromanipulator-side coupling element; and

allowing said transducer-side coupling element to mechanically lock therein.

42. (New) The method of claim 41, further comprising:

fixedly connecting said transducer-side coupling element to said transducer during production of said transducer.

43. (New) The method of claim 41, further comprising:

fixedly connecting said transducer-side coupling element to said transducer in the

course of an implantation of said transducer.

44. (New) The method of claim 41, further comprising:

decoupling said transducer-side coupling element from said micromanipulator-side coupling element, and

removing said transducer from said recipient.

45. (New) The method of claim 44, further comprising:

coupling a replacement transducer, having a transducer-side coupling element, to said micromanipulator.

46. (New) An at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:

at least one electromechanical output transducer;

a micromanipulator configured to be fixedly attached to a recipient's cranial vault and, once so attached, to rotationally and axially position, and fixedly retain, said at least one transducer; and

a coupling unit, disposed between said transducer and said micromanipulator, configured to permit decoupling of said transducer from said micromanipulator while maintaining the position of said micromanipulator, comprising:

a transducer-side coupling element, connected to said transducer, having a first configuration and an at least partially deformed second configuration,

a micromanipulator-side coupling element connected to said micromanipulator configured to receive said transducer-side element, and

wherein said transducer-side coupling element adopts said second configuration during insertion into said micromanipulator-side element, and regains said first configuration following insertion, to thereby mechanically lock said transducer-side coupling element into said micromanipulator-side coupling element.

47. (New) The device of claim 46, wherein said transducer-side coupling element comprises:

a truncated head having an at least partially circular base;

a cylindrical neck, connected to and aligned with said base along an axis through the center of said base, extending longitudinally away from said base, and having a

circumference that is smaller than that of said base, and

a collar extending radially from said neck at an end of said neck remote from said base.

48. (New) The device of claim 47, wherein said micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises:

a circular cylindrical receiver having an inner diameter is approximately the same as the outer of said neck, and an outer diameter that is smaller than a diameter of said base.

49. (New) The device of claim 46, wherein said transducer-side coupling element is configured to be axially pressed into said micromanipulator-side coupling element.

50. (New) The device of claim 46, wherein said transducer-side coupling element is made of a resiliently flexible

51. (New) The device of claim 46, wherein said transducer-side coupling element is at least partially made of elastic material.

52. (New) The system of claim 51, wherein said elastic material is a polymeric material.

53. (New) The device of claim 46, wherein said micromanipulator-side coupling element is a rigid annular receiver member.

54. (New) The device of claim 46, wherein said transducer-side coupling element is configured to decouple from micromanipulator-side coupling element when said head is compressed at least slightly.